



RETIREE TIMES

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Central Coast honors two RAO volunteers during Older Americans Month

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing – Retiree Project Officer

Two volunteers from Vandenberg's Joint Retiree Center were honored at the Central Coast Commission for Senior Citizens' 18th annual luncheon to celebrate Older Americans' Month May 30 at the Royal Scandinavian Inn, Solvang.

The theme of this year's events was "America: A Community for All Ages."

Charles Brown, "Intergenerational Effort of the Year" nominee, was recognized for his substantial accomplishments that transcend age.

A computer "pioneer" – at age 89 – Brown teaches military retirees and widows to use computers and access the internet.

He created "favorite lists" of web sites, for each military service, on the Joint Retiree Center's training computers to enable retirees, their spouses, and widows easy access to information on their service.

Chuck started a computer volunteer program for Santa Maria Boys/Girls Club, Unity Church, and senior center.

In 2001, Brown volunteered 286 hours

to inform retirees on the TRICARE for Life military health insurance program and to bring them into the computer age.

Maj. Gen. Richard Murray, President of the National Association for Uniformed Services, recognized Chuck, in the NAUS Journal, as "epitomizing the volunteer spirit."

Patricia Gehres, nominated for "Senior Citizen of the Year," received an especially designed medallion to commemorate the event.

During 2001, Gehres volunteered almost 200 hours at the Retiree Center and, in the fourth quarter, assisted over 100 retirees who visited.

A member of the National Society of Military Widows, she helped other widows to cope with personal problems and sought sources in the local community to aid them.

Gehres' other awards for 2001 include Vandenberg's "Volunteer of the Quarter" for the fourth quarter; and, the Air Force Volunteer Excellence Award.

Seven volunteers from the Retiree Center enjoyed the festivities and shared in honoring Pat and Chuck.



RAO Photo by Faye Gillis

Retired Navy Lt. j.g. Charles Brown (left) and Patricia Gehres, RAO volunteers and nominees for the Older Americans' Month award, proudly display the medallions (inset) they received May 30 during the celebration luncheon at the Royal Scandinavian Inn in Solvang.



Photo by 30 SW

Patricia Gehres (left) receives the Air Force "Volunteer Excellence Award" from Col. Richard A. Strathearn, 30th Space Wing vice commander.

RAO Volunteer wins Excellence Award

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney

30th Space Wing – Retiree Project Officer

One of the Joint Retiree Center's tireless volunteers recently received the Air Force Volunteer Excellence Award during the volunteer recognition ceremony at the Pacific Coast Club on April 23.

Patricia Gehres, widow of retired Air Force Master Sgt. George Gehres, received the award from Col. Richard Strathearn, 30th Space Wing vice commander.

The Air Force established the VEA to recognize military and federal retirees, current federal civilians and family members who perform outstanding community service of a sustained, direct and consequential nature.

Gehres was one of three recipients awarded the VEA.

Gehres epitomizes "sustained community service" as she has been an active volunteer in the Vandenberg AFB and Lompoc community since 1957, when Vandenberg was called "Cooke AFB."

In the early 1960's, Pat volunteered at the base hospital, served in the local Cub Scouts and Brownies, and was an active member of the Eastern Star, Lompoc Miguelito Chapter.

Today, for the second time in her 36 years as an Eastern Star member, Pat holds the highest local office as the Worthy Matron.

Her chapter raises funds for college scholarships, assisting cancer patients, and disaster relief.

She has provided funds to support 22 Shriners' crippled children and burn hospitals.

Gehres was named Volunteer of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2001.

The award recognized the numerous hours that she worked at the Joint Retiree Center assisting retirees and widows.

She staffed an information table at Retiree Appreciation Day 2001 and apprised 700 retirees on

See EXCELLENCE Page 8

Director's Corner

Recognizes veterans' contributions, extends invitation to visit RAO

By Capt. Cy Buehler,
SC, USN (Ret.)

RAO Director

As we look back on our nation's 226th birthday, we find that there have been threats of some sort or another almost always being imposed on our beloved country.

Hot wars, cold wars and peace-keeping seem to be ever with us. And, in all of this turmoil, individuals and their families stood up for America and kept her free.

For many, the ultimate sacrifice was made and, for the others, they came home and kept their country strong. Often they were soon forgotten and had to struggle for their well being.

Today, military retirees are recognized by all of the services. Retiree activities centers are found throughout the United States and overseas.

In the short time that I have been aboard (to use a Navy term), I have found the staff of volunteers at the Retired Activities Center to be both dedicated and eager to give the best possible support to the



RAO Photo by John McGraw

Cy Buehler

retired community. They are there to keep retirees informed on the latest developments that affect the retirees and will help solve various problems that may arise. They have publications from all of the services and if they do not have an immediate answer to a question, they will research it until they find an answer or someone that can. The Center here at Vandenberg Air Force Base is second to none.

There are five computers with connections to the web available for retirees and widows to use. On Wednesdays and Fridays, there is a computer trainer who will assist

beginners into the world of computers. If you are considering the purchase of a computer but are not sure if you want to, this is the perfect way to "try before you buy."

So here is an open invitation to stop in, say hello, get acquainted and have a cup of coffee and maybe even a cookie (just like the U.S.O.). You are always welcome.

National Guard to meet in Long Beach Sept. 6 to 9 for 124th annual conference

The National Guard Association of the United States will conduct its 124th Annual Conference and Exhibition in Long Beach, California, Sept. 6 through 9.

More than 5,000 Air and Army Guardsmen, active and retired from all 50 states will assemble in

Long Beach to conduct business. Besides social events and professional sessions, this NGAUS conference will include the largest military trade show on the West Coast at the Long Beach Convention Center.

The host for this conference in

Southern California is the California National Guard.

For more details visit www.goldrush2002.org and www.ngaus.org. Or call (916) 978-3999. (Source: NGAUS)

Former 15th Support Group commander steps into Wing's No. 2 slot

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney
30th Space Wing – Retiree Project
Officer

The former 15th Support Group commander at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, has stepped aboard to take on his new role as the 30th Space Wing vice commander.

Col. Wayne Louis has served as a deputy support group commander, commanded a space surveillance squadron, commanded a remote satellite tracking station, and held staff positions at Headquarters Air Force Space Command, and served with the National Aeronautics and Space Agency.

The new vice commander was commissioned through the Reserve Officers Training Corps program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., where he received his bachelor's degree in political science.

He also has a master's degree in national security and strategic

studies from the Naval War College at Newport, R.I.

During Louis' career, he has served in several joint assignments and has attended the Armed Forces Staff College, Naval Command and Staff College, Air War College, and the Marine War College.

His joint awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, and the Joint Meritorious Unit Award.

One of the vice commander's duties is to serve as the Retiree Activities Program coordinator. Louis' sense of "jointness" will serve him well as he provides liaison between the active duty staff and interfaces with the Joint Retiree Center's Director, retired Navy Capt. Cy Buehler.

Undoubtedly, the retirees and widows will have an opportunity to meet Col. Louis at one of their social events.

RETIREE TIMES

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Non-advertisement content is compiled from various sources by the Vandenberg Retired Activities Office. Even though reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the contents, no guarantee of such accuracy is made nor should be assumed. Direct questions on the various topics to the agencies and phone numbers listed in the articles. All photographs, unless otherwise indicated are RAO or Air Force Photos.

Publication deadlines are the 15th of March, June, September and December. The Retiree Activities Office reserves the right to edit all submissions for style and space. Send submissions to 30SW/CVR, 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-1461 or via facsimile to (805) 606-0437. The phone number is (805) 606-5474. Email may be addressed to retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

Manager explains AAFES local policies for prices at gas pumps

By Steve Reisbeck

Vandenberg AFB Exchange Manager

I am often asked, "Why are off-base gasoline prices sometimes lower than prices at the AAFES pump?"

Our policy is to do weekly price surveys of at least five service stations in the nearest local community – Lompoc – and establish the AAFES price equal to the lowest price surveyed.

Sometimes this means that we sell gasoline below cost.

Overall, our prices are fair and competitive with the local community, yet they allow enough income to cover operating expenses and to generate monies for the morale, welfare, and recreation fund for our military members.

Another frequently asked question is: "Why do I pay taxes on gasoline, but not on merchandise purchased at AAFES?"

The Base Exchange as a U. S. government instrumentality is immune from state and local taxes unless Congress waives the immunity.

With the Hayden Cartwright Act, 4 U. S. C. 104, the U. S. Congress waived the immunity on motor fuel that AAFES sells.

Consequently, AAFES pays state and local motor fuel taxes, also underground storage fees.

These taxes and fees are in-



RAO Photo by John McGraw

Steve Reisbeck, Vandenberg Base Exchange Store Manager, briefed widows, retirees, and spouses on gas prices and other AAFES issues at the National Society of Military Widows, Central Coast Chapter's April meeting. He has generously supported Retiree Appreciation Days for the last three years.

cluded in the motor fuel price to the military customer.

However, other items that the

BX/PX sells enjoy the "immunity" and are not subject to state and local taxes.

Congress creates Vets history project

The United States Congress has created the Veterans History Project with authorizing legislation Public Law 106-380.

The mission of the Veterans History Project is to collect the memories, accounts, and documents of war veterans and of those who served in support of them during World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars, and to preserve their stories of experience and service for future generations.

The Veterans History Project covers World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars.

It includes all participants of those wars—men and women, civilian and military.

It documents the contributions of civilian volunteers, support staff, and war industry workers as well as the experiences of

military personnel from all ranks and all branches of service—the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

You are encouraged to read the information and instructions on the Web site and to join in making the Veterans History Project a success.

All Americans are encouraged to participate. Plan to donate your interview to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress or to one of our partner institutions in your area who will help us preserve the National Veterans History Collection.

The Library of Congress will create a catalog of all oral histories and other documentation collected as a result of the Veterans History Project, including those items preserved at other sites by participating partners.

The names of all veterans and civilians who are interviewed or whose letters, diaries, and other documents are donated to the National Veterans History Collection will appear on this Web site in the future.

Mail service to the Library of Congress via the U.S. Postal Service may be delayed because of security concerns.

Contact the Library via email, fax, or telephone at the addresses and numbers below:

Phone: (202) 707-4916, Message Line: 1-888-371-5848.

FAX: (202) 252-2046.

Email: vohp@loc.gov.

Website URL: <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets>.

Mail inquiries or materials to: The Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress 101 Independence Ave., SE Washington DC 20540-4615. (Contributed article)

Outgoing RAO project officer extends thanks

By Col. (ret)

Myrna-Lynne Whitney

In my article, "Always A Family Member – Always A Home," which appeared in the winter edition of the "Retiree Times," I shared my feelings of loss and sadness as my 30-year Air Force career was ending.

Due to the events of September 11 and the President's invoking Stop-Loss, I was fortunate to have a five-month extension. But, at the end of May, my retirement was official.

During my lifetime, I have said many "good-byes" and they never have been easy; however, this one is especially difficult as there are so many cherished memories. Author Richard Bach said, "you are never given a dream without also being given the power to make it true."

Thanks to Vandenberg's senior leaders, active duty military, civilians, contractors, military retirees, and widows I had the "power" to realize my "dream" – the creation of the Joint Retiree Center — the highlight of my military career.

The opportunity to lead Team Vandenberg in planning and implementing three highly successful Retiree Appreciation Days – 1999, 2000, and 2001 – is one that I greatly value and always will remember.

I am not sure what the plans are for Appreciation Day 2002, but I have left a comprehensive continuity book for the new project officer to use and I am sure that soon plans will unfold for Appreciation Day 2002.

I am grateful for the outstanding support that I have had from the retirees and widows – those who volunteer in the Center and take care of daily operations –

those who not only give their time, but also funds.

I do not want to name individuals because ALL of you are very important in the "service tapes-tray" of the Center.

Reflecting upon some accomplishments over the years—the transition from newsletter to the "Retiree Times," the quarterly potlucks, the monthly meetings with guest speakers, and the award nominees and winners – I realize that Disraeli's observation that "the secret of success is constancy of purpose" is true. Whether working an information table at Appreciation Day, folding and labeling the quarterly newspaper, or filming our video, "Launching a Dream... A Phoenix Rising," we were focused on the success of the Center.

I will truly miss writing for the paper, resolving problems, and working with all the volunteers who have become like family to me.

You are a team of dedicated, responsible, committed individuals, who I know will work to take the Center and the retirees' and widows' programs to new heights.

However, it is now time for me to pursue another dream – working on a law degree.

As I say "farewell," I close with one of my favorite quotes from American author William Saroyan, which espouses my basic philosophy – "People is all everything is, all it has ever been, all it will ever be."

Thank you all for my invaluable memories – and, for being charms on my bracelet of life.

Myrna-Lynne Whitney

At the monthly meetings ...



RAO Photo by John McGraw

(Left) Col. Charles Campbell, 30th Medical Group commander, briefs changes in the base hospital, how TRICARE for Life is working, and future trends in medicine during the May meeting in the Joint Retiree Center. After the meeting, Campbell, a physician, spent an additional two hours answering people's questions about health-related concerns.



RAO Photo by John McGraw

(Left) Dr. Rami Zarnegar, ophthalmologist from the Santa Maria Shepard Eye Clinic, briefs about eye diseases and corrective eye surgery for cataracts during the June potluck. He also answered several questions posed by those who may need future eye surgery.



RAO Photo by John McGraw

Chris Van Sickle (left), internal auditor, from the Vandenberg Federal Credit Union, briefed retirees and widows about the growing threat of identity theft at the April retiree meeting.



RAO Photo by John McGraw

Gus Lopez (left), California Highway Patrol Officer, discussed highway safety issues, recently passed laws and shared information packages during the National Society of Military Widows, Central Coast Chapter 44's May meeting.

DoD forges 'mutually beneficial partnership with VA

The Defense Department is looking to build "a mutually beneficial partnership" with the Department of Veterans Affairs to minimize both organizations' health care costs.

"As we face the threat of terrorism, it is more important than ever that we ensure effective coordination and cooperation with other federal agencies and organizations with necessary expertise," Dr. Bill Winkenwerder said in prepared remarks to Congress.

The doctor is the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

He testified Mar. 13 before the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee on medical issues in President Bush's fiscal 2003 budget request.

The administration seeks \$20.9 billion for the military health system. Organizations "with neces-

sary expertise" especially include the VA and Department of Health and Human Services, Winkenwerder said.

DoD hopes that a partnership with the VA "optimizes the use of resources and infrastructure to improve access to quality health care and increase the cost-effectiveness of each department's operations," he said.

The two departments currently have eight joint ventures around the country providing coordinated health care to both VA and DoD medical care beneficiaries.

"However, all of these agreements are not fully utilized," he

"The focus of our efforts is to move the relationship with the VA from one of sharing to a proactive partnership ... while benefiting the service members, veteran and taxpayer,"

Dr. Bill Winkenwerder

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs

told the committee members.

He said the fiscal 2003 budget request lays out several concrete short-term goals:

- ◆ Establish solid business procedures for reimbursement of services.

- ◆ Improve access to health care through VA participation in TRICARE.

- ◆ Examine joint opportunities in pharmaceuticals.

- ◆ Make it easier for DoD and

VA to exchange health care information.

- ◆ Establish a "long-range joint strategic planning activity" between the two agencies.

DoD officials expect to be able to transmit computerized patient medical record data to the VA by fiscal 2005, Winkenwerder said.

"The focus of our efforts is to move the relationship with the VA from one of sharing to a proactive partnership that meets the missions of both agencies while benefiting the service members, veteran and taxpayer," he said.

The assistant secretary also outlined force health protection

and medical readiness issues covered in the budget request.

"The terrorist acts of last fall placed us on a war footing and escalated the urgency of our need for preparedness," Winkenwerder told the senators.

He said DoD is working to develop investigational new drug protocols and guidelines for smallpox and botulinum toxoid vaccines, and pyridostigmine bromide, or PB, tablets, which are used to counteract the effects of nerve agents.

Experts, he added, are also examining the use of the anthrax vaccine and antibiotics as a post-exposure preventive measure—a technique used after the anthrax attacks loosed in the U.S. mail last year. (*American Forces Press Service*)

Air Force Pamphlet offers valuable survivor benefit tips

Though it won't make the best seller lists, a recently published electronic version of an Air Force pamphlet should be in the file of every Air Force retiree with a computer. And it should be reviewed extensively by every potential surviving spouse and beneficiary of a retiree. Survivors of retirees from other services will also find parts of it useful.

It's Air Force Pamphlet 36-3028, Benefits and Entitlements for Family Members of Retired Air Force Deceased, prepared by the Casualty Assistance staff at the Air Force Personnel Center. Pub-

lished Nov. 1, 2001, it's available online at: <http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afpam36-3028/afpam36-3028.pdf> If currently unable to read the portable document format (.pdf), you will need to download the Adobe Reader which is available free at: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

The pamphlet provides general information about most federal

See PAMPHLET Page 5

Around the world in 90 days

And we're off! Around The World In 90 Days kicked off June 1st at Vandenberg AFB.

ATWIND is a virtual adventure where players travel to different destinations around the world.

Upon reaching a specific destination, you are then entered into the drawing for that destinations prize.

There are five destinations and the further you travel the better the prizes.

You could win a new computer system, cash, vacation packages, music systems, color televisions and even a brand new car!

To play is simple. All you need to do is visit www.atwind.com and register.

If you do not have a computer at home you may visit the 30th Services ATWIND Home Base at the Services Center or the Joint Retiree Center and they can help you "Get Into It."

Every player is given one free game piece number 9999-0033-333 and, with your support in playing one more game piece, you can help Vandenberg in the base race for twenty five thousand dollars in quality of life money.

To get your game pieces check the location listings in the "Space & Missile Times" and the 30th Services web page at www.30svs.com.

So whether you are in it to win or just want to help your base there is fun for everyone!

For more information you may contact the home base at 606-7976 or 606-0276.



RAO Photo by John McGraw

John Olson, 30th Services Squadron's marketing representative, informs retirees and widows on registering to play ATWIND at the June quarterly potluck. Olson distributed game pieces to attendees and advised where to obtain more pieces. Retirees and widows may use the Joint Retiree Center's computers to play ATWIND.

PAMPHLET from Page 4

benefits and entitlements available to eligible family members of deceased retired Air Force personnel and explains the application process.

Subjects included in the pamphlet range from the procedures to report the death of retired Air Force members to burial benefits and honors due, possible monetary benefits to the survivor, and possible benefits and entitlements due the next of kin or beneficiary from the military, Department of Veterans Affairs, Social Security. It also list various agencies the survivor can call on for possible assistance if needed.

Although it's designed primarily for the ben-

eficiary upon the death of the retiree, every retiree may want to review the pamphlet with his family members and discuss anything about which they might be unsure.

They can also discuss these matters with the nearest Casualty Assistance Representative who will explain the matter or them to the agency concerned.

Members of the retiree community should note that government agencies outside the Air Force administer most of the benefits discussed in the pamphlet, and determine eligibility for such benefits and establish the amount paid, if any. (Courtesy AFHQ Pubs website)

RAO video launches acting careers for retirees, widows

By Col. Myrna-Lynne Whitney
30th Space Wing – Retiree Project Officer

"*Launching a Dream ... A Phoenix Rising*," the nine-minute video that tells the Vandenberg Joint Retiree Center's story, won kudos when it was aired at the Air Force Retiree Council's May conference at Randolph AFB, Texas.

Maj. Gen. Richard "Dick" Murray, President of the National Association for Uniformed Services and twice our Appreciation Day guest speaker, was most impressed with the video and plans to show it when he speaks at Retiree Appreciation Days throughout the United States and overseas.

The 30th Space Wing Public Affairs office showed the video on the "Commander's channel" in early May during "Guardian Challenge." This allowed base residents and visitors, who live in base quarters, to see the film.

I enjoyed writing the script and being a part of the action, and I know that all our volunteers who participated in the production had a lot of fun and found the experience rewarding.

On behalf of the retirees, wid-

ows, and myself, I extend a special "thank you" to the following 30th Communications Squadron members who made this outstanding video possible: Lt. Col. Bradley Ashley, 30th Communications Squadron Commander; Capt. Patricia Wiegman-Lenz, Commander, Support Flight; Chris Zenor, producer and director; Gabrielle DeFrancisco, producer and editor; James Jones, associate producer.

Also, Tech. Sgt. James Monk, associate producer and videographer; Master Sgt. Charles Latham, crew chief and project coordinator; Tech. Sgts. Marty Miller and Rodney Miranda, Staff Sgts. Matthew Osborn, Shannon Starr, Pamela Taubman, Ronald Van Usdal, Jennifer Wallis, Senior Airmen Corey Bullard and Ebony Woods, Airmen 1st Class Taqccora Lewis and Paige Ramos, videographers and photographers.

If any of you want to see the video, we have copies in the Joint Retiree Center. Why not come in and relax in our comfortable lounge and view it on our big-screen TV?

Take two and ...

Air Force Reserve Maj. Michele Williams, pharmacist at Vandenberg's base clinic, discusses how vitamins and herbs react with prescription medications during the National Society of Military Widows, Central Coast Chapter 44's April meeting. Many retirees and their spouses attended the meeting and received reference literature.



RAO Photo by John McGraw

**Retiree
Activities
Center**

Building 10364, Base Exchange Area
Office Hours: Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Closed Saturday, Sunday and Federal Holidays

TRICARE reduces catastrophic cap by 50 percent

Compiled from Reports

30th Space Wing Public Affairs

Retirees of all ages now have greater financial protection because of a recent change in TRICARE benefits.

The Catastrophic Cap — the limit on the total amount retirees, seniors and their families pay when using TRICARE — has been reduced by half.

As of Oct. 1, 2001, the TRICARE fiscal year catastrophic cap was reduced from \$7,500 to \$3,000 for retirees, their family members and survivors.

The fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 annually.

The change applies to people

who use TRICARE Prime, Extra or Standard, or use TRICARE for Life.

This means that for TRICARE-covered services, people will pay no more than \$3,000 in out of pocket expenses in a given year. TRICARE will pick up the remaining cost as long as it's a covered service.

Members enrolled on TRICARE Prime to include; retirees, family members of retirees and survivors will not have to pay relevant out-of-pocket expenses for the fiscal year.

The enrollment fees, deductibles, co-payments and cost-shares, with the exception of

fees assessed from Point-of-Service use, can be credited to the fiscal year's catastrophic cap.

A \$3,000 catastrophic cap per enrollment year also protects retirees, survivors and retiree family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime.

The enrollment year for the catastrophic cap is based on a 12-month enrollment period.

The out-of-pocket expenses can be applied toward the fiscal year and enrollment year catastrophic caps.

It is important to note that deductibles and cost shares incurred for services provided through Point-of-Service can not

be credited to the catastrophic cap enrollment year.

Prime enrollees will not pay any more co-payments or enrollment fees for the rest of their enrollment year once the year's catastrophic cap is met.

For beneficiaries who use TRICARE Extra or Standard, or TRICARE For Life, once their fiscal year catastrophic cap is met, the TRICARE determined allowable amount would be paid in full for all covered services and supplies for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Enrollment fees, co-payments and cost-shares, except for those assessed to Point-of-Service may

be credited to the fiscal year catastrophic cap.

The catastrophic cap reduction is effective retroactive to Oct. 1, 2000.

Some relevant refunds are being issued to beneficiaries who have already paid more than \$3,000 in out of pocket costs this fiscal year.

For more information regarding catastrophic caps, or for information on how to receive a reimbursement due to the catastrophic cap reduction, call the TRICARE Customer Care Center at (800) 242-6788.

New law allows VA to furnish 'appropriate headstone or marker'

On Dec. 27, 2001, President Bush signed Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001.

This law includes a provision that allows the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish an appropriate headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries, whose deaths occur on or after Dec. 27, 2001, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a non-government marker. This new provision is codified at 38 U.S.C. § 2306(d).

The National Cemetery Administration is preparing a regulation to describe how it will implement the new law.

Until the regulation is published, the following instructions are in effect: VA will furnish, when requested, an appropriate government headstone or marker at the expense of the United States for the grave of an eligible veteran or eligible reservist who is buried in a private cemetery regardless of whether the grave is already marked by a headstone or marker purchased at private expense.

The veteran's death must have occurred on or after Dec. 27, 2001, which is the law's enactment date. For those veterans who died before this date, VA is unable to provide a Government headstone or marker for already marked veteran gravesites.

VA may provide any headstone or marker available, as listed on the application form.

A Government headstone or marker may be furnished only if the individual making the request certifies that the marker will be placed on the grave, if feasible, otherwise, as close to the grave as possible within the grounds of a private cemetery.

VA shall deliver any headstone or marker furnished under this law directly to the cemetery where the grave is located or to a receiving agent for delivery to the cemetery, i.e. funeral home, Veterans' Service Officer, etc.

NCA will revise its headstone and marker application (VA Form 40-1330) to remove language indicating markers will only be provided for unmarked graves.

VA is now accepting applications for markers under the provisions of Public Law 107-103.

The required VA Form 40-1330, "Application for

Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery," is available at the website <http://www.cem.va.gov/pdf/401330.pdf> and California State Veterans' Service Offices. The form is also available at the Vandenberg Retired Activities Office.

The form must be submitted by the next of kin, funeral director, or cemetery representative, along with a copy of the veteran's military discharge documents (including DD Form 214), to request a government-provided headstone or marker.

Do not send original documents, as they will not be returned.

Until this form is revised, applicants should ignore references to "unmarked graves, footstones, and supplement" and should note in Box 27, "Remarks" that this will be a second marker to mark a veteran's gravesite.

VA furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any deceased veteran discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces under conditions other than dishonorable when buried in a national military or state veterans cemetery.

Service after Sept. 7, 1980, must be for a minimum of 24 months or be completed under special circumstances, (e.g., death on active duty).

Persons with 20 years of service in the National Guard or Reserves who are entitled to retired pay subsequent to Oct. 27, 1992, are also eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker.

A copy of the "Reserve Retirement Eligibility Benefits Letter" must accompany the application. Active duty service while in the National Guard or Reserves also establishes eligibility.

Service prior to World War I requires detailed documentation to prove eligibility, such as muster rolls, extracts from state files, military or state organization where served, pension or land warrants, etc.

Headstones and markers are provided for eligible spouses and dependents of veterans only when buried in a national, military post/base, or state veterans cemetery.

For more information, visit websites <http://www.cem.va.gov/> and <http://www.cem.va.gov/whatsnew.htm>. (Source: VA and MOWW)

Remember ...



Contributed Photo

Retired Army Lt. Col. Don Cook (left), Retired Air Force Sgt. Richard Barkley (center) and Retired Army Sgt. Maj. Joe Padila (right), all from the Santa Maria Korean War Veterans, Post 184, meet at Vandenberg's Korean War Memorial to reflect on June 25, 1950, the beginning of a war that changed their lives.

TROA holds picnic Aug. 24

The Santa Maria - Lompoc Chapter of The Retired Officers Association will hold its annual barbecue picnic on Saturday, Aug. 24 at the Los Alamos Community Park in Los Alamos. Active duty and retired officers of all services are invited, whether or not a member of TROA.

Weather is expected to be sunny and warm so bring your spouse and family. We furnish tri-tip barbecue, salad, beans, French bread and cold drinks

(sodas, beer and wine.) Social hour is at 11 a.m and barbecue is served at 12 noon. Cost is just \$5.00. Bring your own place settings.. For planning purposes, reservations are required. Call 733-1819 or 937-9748

Directions: In Los Alamos, Turn south into Bell St., drive a half-mile and then turn left into the park. Follow the park road around to the left where you will find parking.

Repeat after me ..

RAO Photo by John McGraw

Retired Navy Capt. Cy Buehler, the Retiree Activities Director, administers the oath of office to Ruth Mudge, an artist from Santa Maria. Mudge, an officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve, was selected for promotion to lieutenant commander.

What does your commissary offer?

BVI means great value!

Check your Vandenberg AFB commissary shelves for Best Value Items that are increasing in numbers even as you read this.

BVI signs mean the lowest price found on commissary shelves also the lowest price for the same size item, national or store brand at grocery stores, supermarkets, or supercenters.

Shoppers who buy BVIs save an additional 30 to 50 percent over other brands.

BVIs are now available in over 150 different categories – over 600 items.

DeCA sells over 12 million BVIs every month. Shampoos, conditioners, baby food, paper products, and spices are just a few of the BVIs you'll find in your commissary.

DeCA's case lot sale coming in September

Make room in your pantry and clean out your garage!

The second annual worldwide case lot sale is coming to Vandenberg AFB Sep. 21 and 22.

The sale will feature everything from canned to paper goods at significant savings.

Most commissaries will have special deals on cereal, juices, soups, and health/beauty items, also meat and produce specials.

In early September, check www.commissaries.com for more information on dates and location.

♦ For retirees without computers, come into the Joint Retiree Center and use our computers to access this website. Also, watch for information in the *Space and Missile Times* and around the base.

Summer food safety tips:

♦ While grocery shopping, select meat, fish, poultry and milk last just before going to the checkout. This prevents spoilage of these items while shopping.

♦ Bring a cooler for meats, ice cream, and other items that need to be cool. This works well if you have a long drive home on a hot day.

♦ Use clean utensils for picnics and barbecues.

♦ Use separate serving plates for raw meat and cooked meat to prevent cross-contamination from bacteria that may be in the raw meat.

♦ Cook hamburgers until the middle is no long pink or the internal temperature is 160 F when measured with a meat thermometer.

Society of Military Widows

What is the organization?

Non-profit national military widows organization founded in 1968 and, in 1984, affiliated with the National Association for Uniformed Services

(NAUS) to build a stronger organization to protect the hard-earned benefits and entitlements of military widows. The affiliation provides for membership development, recruitment, administrative efficiency and Washington representation on legislative issues.

Who are the members? Widows of deceased military personnel of all ranks, whether active duty or retired from the service. The widow must possess a valid ("URW" unremarried widow) military ID card. **Affiliated membership** – widows without a valid URW military ID card interested in helping further the goals of SMW. They are non-voting members.

Where are they located?

Chapters exist throughout the United States. Members volunteer in their communities and support legislative issues that affect the military/veteran community.

How do they help?

1. Member support services – local chapters provide a friendly, caring, social environment and enable individuals to fulfill projects of national and local importance; and help each other in special services. An annual national convention provides informative workshops on legislation and other areas of interest.

2. Community and volunteer services – widows volunteer to work and support community and military projects.

3. Legislative accomplishments — SMW works

"In united effort lies our strength."

Society of Military Widows motto

with NAUS lobbyists on legislation that affects widows' interests. Played a major role in legislation that provided a "forgotten widows" benefit; restored de-

pendency and indemnity compensation benefit when the widow's remarriage results in divorce or death of spouse; fought for Medicare reimbursement for DoD and VA medical facilities; strongly supported National Mail Order Pharmacy Program; and stopped efforts to close more commissaries.

4. Benefits & Services – SMW members receive benefits and services free or at low, discounted prices through NAUS. The following are a few examples: no fee credit card, discount hotel program, travel tours, dental/hearing/vision plans, mail order prescription drugs, and the NAUS *Uniformed Services Journal* that keeps you informed on the latest SMW news and issues that concern widows.

How is SMW organized?

There are local chapters throughout the nation. At the national level, SMW elects its own Board of Directors and officers from its membership. SMW representatives also serve on the NAUS Board of Directors.

How is SMW financed?

National membership dues are \$12 per year, \$30 for 3 years, and \$48 for 5 years. Life membership dues may be paid in quarterly installments and range from \$220 to \$130 depending upon the individual's age. Local chapter dues are paid to the individual chapters.

Want more information?

Contact Society of Military Widows, National Headquarters, 5535 Hempstead Way, Springfield, Va. 22151, or call (800) 842-3451, Ext. 3009.

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

What is this organization?

A non-profit national military widows service organization that the United States Congress chartered in 1980. It is dedicated solely to serve the needs, concerns, and welfare of service widows.

Who are the members?

Widows of men who died serving in the U.S. Armed Forces or as a result of service connected disabilities and widows of servicemen of all ranks, races, and creeds who participated in armed conflicts involving the United States of America.

Where are they located?

In all 50 states, in government, industry, commercial enterprises, and in homes; volunteers in our military and veterans hospitals, welfare projects, churches, schools, and community activities; students in schools, colleges, and universities throughout the country.

How do they help? Three-pronged program:

1. Member support services – networking through local chapters and regional conferences; fund-raising teas to support projects honoring the memory of husbands; quarterly newsletter; special recognition awards; and the national convention.

"United we stand to win, divided we fall and are forgotten!"

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. motto

2. Community and volunteer services – volunteers work in community, military, and veterans hospitals; personal contributions supporting community, military

and veterans projects; organizational support for veterans memorial projects and programs.

3. Legislative information services – provides information on issues such as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, direct deposit, DIC reinstatement for remarried widows, cost of living adjustment, Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS), TRICARE FOR LIFE, VA civilian health and medical program, VA home loan guaranties. GSW members appear before various House and Senate committees on issues concerning compensation, educational benefits, medical care, and other programs pertaining to the welfare of widows.

How is GSW organized?

There are local chapters. Members living where no local chapters exist are kept informed through regional and national newsletters. The US is divided into eight regions, headed by re-

See GOLD STAR Page 8

Mark your calendars!

Retiree Center

The **third Thursday** of each month at 1 p.m. in the Retiree Center, Building 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Home & Garden Shop – retirees, spouses and widows gather to hear guest speakers, socialize and enjoy cookies and coffee. There is a potluck luncheon that begins at 12 noon each quarter. The schedule is as follows:

July 18 – Exercise for Seniors – Tyson Grier – Vandenberg Wellness Center

Aug. 15 – Emergency Healthcare – Paramedics

Sept. 19 – **Potluck at noon. Meeting at 1 p.m.** Casualty Affairs – Sheila Kaplan – 30th Mission Support Squadron

Oct. 17 – Convalescent Care – Speaker to be determined.

***Nov. – Retiree Appreciation Day – Date to be determined.**

***Dec. 12 – Thursday – HOLIDAY POTLUCK LUNCHEON**

*Denotes different date than third Thursday of the month and for Appreciation Day different location.

NOTE: Speakers may be subject to change. Please check the "Space & Missile Times" for details as days come closer. Also, listen to KUHL on Tuesdays at 8:20 a.m. for current news on events; and watch for flyers posted at the Retiree Center.

Society of Military Widows

The SMW, Central Coast Chapter 44, meets the second Wednesday of each month in the Joint Retiree Center. The ladies have a **business meeting** that begins at **1 p.m.**; usually, followed with a **guest speaker at 2 p.m.** The retirees and spouses frequently attend the informative lecture sessions. Retired Navy Capt. Cy Buehler, Joint Retiree Center Director, will be the guest speaker on Aug. 14. **Military widows, retirees and spouses are invited.**

Tickets, Tours, Cruises

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Services Center, located near the corner of California Blvd. and Washington Ave. It offers a wide variety of excursions to suit every taste. In addition, the tour office lists favorable rates at hotels and motels in the vicinity of Southern California theme parks and Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, and civil service personnel, government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The office publishes the "Tripleletter" listing upcoming events. You can learn more about opportunities by calling (805) 606-7976 and asking to be placed on the mailing list. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. You might also visit their website at www.vandenberg-leisure-tours.org. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office.

Jul. 20	Champions on Ice, San Jose, \$98
Jul. 27	Gilroy Garlic Festival, \$35, transportation only
Aug. 4-6	San Francisco, \$235 per person sharing
Aug. 10	Roaring Camp Steam Train and Barbecue, \$65
Aug. 16-17	Laguna Beach Pageant & Huntington Museum, \$169 per person sharing
Aug. 19-22	Laughlin, \$74 per person sharing, \$94 single
Aug. 24	Monterey for a Day, \$35, transportation only
Aug. 28-Sep. 9	Alaska Cruise, \$2545-2995 per person sharing
Sep. 15-19	Catalina Island, \$230 per person sharing
Sep. 22-Oct. 3	Colorado & Arizona Excursion Trains, \$1169 per person sharing, \$1669 single
Oct. 6	Ventura Harvest Festival, \$35 transportation/entrance
Oct. 13-14	Las Vegas Turnaround, \$40
Oct. 16	Momma Mia at Ahmanson Theatre, \$110
Oct. 18-25	Plantations, Gardens & Southern Hospitality of Georgia & South Carolina, \$1,669 per person sharing, \$1,969 single
Oct. 19	Getty Museum, \$35, transportation/entrance
Nov. 3-6	Laughlin, \$84 per person sharing, \$130 single
Nov. 14-16	Palm Springs, \$218 per person sharing

EXCELLENCE from Page 1

what the Center offers.

As a charter member of the National Society of Military Widows, Central Coast Chapter 44, Pat empathetically assists other widows, retiree visitors, and volunteers. Her life has been one of sacrifice and service to her nation as a military spouse and an active volunteer.

GOLD STAR from Page 7

gional officers elected by members. The national organization, composed of elected officers and board of directors, represents all regions.

How is GSW financed?

Membership dues are \$15 per year – national receives \$10 and the chapter/region retains \$5. Chapters and regions augment funds with fund-raising projects to support local charities.

More information desired? Contact Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. (888) 751-6350 or (205) 823-1778 —Birmingham, Alabama office; or, Washington D.C. office – (888) 479-9788 or (703) 998-0064.



Play ATWIND!

Win Prizes!

See story on

page 5

Sampson AFB Vets search for alumni

The Sampson Air Force Base Veterans Association, Inc. is searching for all former basic and special schools trainees, permanent party -- officers and enlisted -- of the 3650th Basic Military Wing who were stationed at Sampson AFB, New York during the period from 1950 to 1957.

Annual reunions are held in the Northeast in addition to regional events and gatherings.

Contact Chip Phillips, Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 331, Williamsville, NY 14231. Phone: (716) 633-1119, Fax: (716) 633-9118 or Email: chip34@aol.com.

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Retiree Times address corrections

The mailing list for this newsletter is maintained by the Retiree Activities Office (RAO) based on input from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DEERS) and other sources as well as input directly from addressees. Please make any corrections necessary on the label below, clip and return to the RAO.

In the event the retiree is deceased, indicate date and given name of surviving spouse. We want to continue to send the newsletter to the widow/widower. The mailing address of the RAO is shown below. You may also send e-mail to: retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.